

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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NSAE-00 SIL-01 AID-05 SS-15 SP-02 NSC-05 PA-01
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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, TH
SUBJ: CALL ON LABOR DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR GENERAL WICHIT SAENGTHONG

REF: A) BANGKOK 23736; B) BANGKOK 33908

1. EMBASSY LABOR OFFICER CALLED ON WICHIT SAENGTHONG, RECENTLY APPOINTED DIRECTOR GENERAL, RTG DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, ON DECEMBER 14, 1977, TO OFFER CONGRATULATIONS ON NEW ASSIGNMENT AND DISCUSS CURRENT LABOR ISSUES. THROUGHOUT THE 45 MINUTE CONVERSATION, WICHIT SEEMED ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT HIS NEW JOB AND GENERALLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE TREND OF EVENTS UNDER THE KRIANGSAK GOVERNMENT.

2. ON SENSITIVE ISSUE OF STATUS OF STATE ENTERPRISE WORKERS, WICHIT INDICATED RTG CABINET RULED ON DECEMBER 13 THAT STATE ENTERPRISES ARE INCLUDED UNDER LABOR RELATIONS ACT OF 1975 AND LABOR PROTECTION ACT. THIS REVISES CONTROVERSIAL APRIL 21 RESOLUTION OF THE THANIN CABINET AND SHOULD PAVE WAY FOR REGISTRATION OF THE LABOR CONGRESS OF THAILAND AS EMPLOYEE COUNCIL UNDER SECTION 120 OF THE LABOR RELATIONS ACT. WICHIT SAID DECISION SHOULD ALSO SERVE TO ELIMINATE OBJECTIONS OF EMPLOYERS CONFEDERATION OF THAILAND TO HOLDING ELECTIONS TO SELECT FIVE EMPLOYER REPRESENTATIVES TO NATIONAL LABOR DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
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(NLDC). WICHIT PLANS TO MEET OB WASURAT OF EMPLOYERS CONFEDERATION ON DECEMBER 16 AND HOPES THAT EMPLOYER REPRESENTATIVES TO NLDC CAN BE SELECTED WITHIN ONE WEEK.

3. WICHIT SAID THAT RTG CABINET AT DECEMBER 13 MEETING ALSO AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO LIFT CURRENT RESTRICTIONS ON FOREIGN LABOR ASSISTANCE ORGANIZATIONS AND "ALLOW THEM TO SUPPORT THAI

TRADE UNIONS IN ORGANIZING SEMINARS AND TRAINING PROGRAMS."
CABINET HAS DELEGATED TASK OF DEVELOPING IMPLEMENTING REGULATIONS
TO MINISTRY OF INTERIOR. WICHIT PLANS TO ORGANIZE MEETING AT
DEPARTMENT HEAD LEVEL WITH MOI IN TWO WEEKS TIME TO WORK OUT
DETAILS.

4. WICHIT SAID THAT POLICE PERMIT REQUIREMENT UNDER NARC ORDER
NO. 4 IS STILL IN EFFECT FOR ALL LABOR UNION ACTIVITIES INVOLVING
FIVE OR MORE PERSONS. HE FAVORS ELIMINATING REQUIREMENT BY
DECLARING UNION ACTIVITIES TO BE "NON-POLITICAL" AND THEREFORE
OUTSIDE PURVIEW OF NARC ORDER NO. 4. HOWEVER, HE SUPPORTS
SYSTEM OF ADVANCE NOTIFICATION TO AVOID POSSIBLE "MISUNDERSTAND-
INGS" BY THE POLICE.

5. EMBASSY LABOR OFFICER DISCUSSED EMBASSY'S CONTINUING INTEREST
IN AND SUPPORT OF ASIAN-AMERICAN FREE LABOR INSTITUTE'S APPLI-
CATION FOR REGISTRATION IN THAILAND AND EXPRESSED HOPE NEW RTG
WOULD EXPEDITE DECISION. WICHIT PROMISED TO CHECK INTO STATUS OF
APPLICATION. AS FOR AAFLI'S DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING POLICE
PERMIT TO CONDUCT LABOR EDUCATION SEMINAR ON DECEMBER 10 AND 11
(SEE REFTEL B), WICHIT SAID CABINET DECISION ON FOREIGN LABOR
ASSISTANCE ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD FACILITATE ISSUANCE OF POLICE
PERMITS FOR FUTURE SEMINARS. WICHIT CAUTIONED HOWEVER, THAT
AAFLI REPRESENTATIVE SHOULD GIVE HIM AMPLE ADVANCE NOTIFICATION
TO INSURE THAT THERE ARE NO HITCHES, RATHER THAN WAIT UNTIL THREE
WORKING DAYS BEFORE SEMINAR SCHEDULED TO BEGIN.
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6. EMBASSY LABOR OFFICER ALSO MENTIONED US DEPARTMENT OF LABOR'S
PENDING SEMINAR OFFER TO RTG DEPARTMENT OF LABOR. (SEE REF A).
WICHIT EXPRESSED INTEREST IN OFFER AND SAID THAT OFF HAND HE
PREFERS SEMINAR TOPIC "A", CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT FOR NEW DOL
TRAINING INSTITUTE. HE RECOMMENDED THAT OFFICIAL FROM DIVISION
OF SPECIAL PROGRAMS, USDOL, VISIT BANGKOK IN LATE FEBRUARY 1978
TO DISCUSS DETAILS.
O'DONOHUE

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